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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are provided for constructing, introducing, and using a planning board as an instructional aid with young children in learning centers. Basically, a planning board is a device that involves children in planning and selecting their own activities; it specifies in an appealing way what activities are available in classroom learning centers and how many children may participate in a particular area at a given time. Included in the guide are illustrated directions for constructing 18 different planning boards. (RH)

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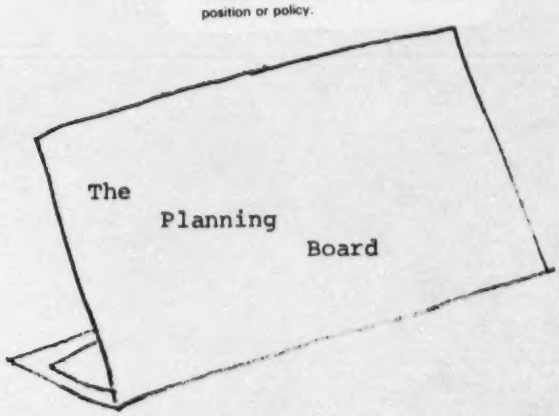

Ideas for Construction and Use with Young Children

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By

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The Planning Board:

Ideas for Construction and Use with Young Children

Learning centers are an important part of the learning environment for young children. In programs for young children learning centers are usually an area or a zone in the room. Learning centers are an instructional device and should have a definite objective or goal. Learning centers have a variety of uses. They motivate the child, provide ways to individualize activity, teach concepts and reinforce skills. Children may work independently, in small groups or with an adult.

Time during the day is provided for self-selected activities. Children are given the opportunity to choose the learning center where they will work. This takes place individually or in a small group. During this time children make decisions based on their interest and what is available in the learning environment. They have the responsibility for getting the materials and returning the materials to the appropriate place. They have the responsibility of staying on a task and completing task. Choices must be made. Children must plan how the self-selected time will be spent.

The role of the teacher is to guide the children in making choices and involve children in planning. The teacher explains available activities and use of the materials. Rules are reviewed and then the teacher moves through out the room giving assistance when necessary, talking to the children about learning task and guiding the children in evaluation of learning.

The Planning Board

The planning board is an instructional device that involves children in selection and planning activities for the self-selected learning center time of the day. The planning board is a visual aid to help the child know what

activities are available and how many may participate in the area during a given time period. The planning board is a visual to help children set and understand limits.

Constructing a Planning Board

The planning board may be any size or any shape and may be made from a variety of materials such as ply board, cork or peg board. A pattern cutting board or heavy card board is also suitable. Select a basic and attractive color for the background. A light green, blue or yellow will usually blend with any selected theme. Select a theme for the figures on the planning board. A year round theme would be more workable if the figures and symbols are permanent on the board. A seasonal or monthly theme is appropriate if plans are made to change figures and symbols during the year.

Paint figures that represent each center directly on the board or construct figures from tag or poster board. When using poster board or tag board laminating will make materials more durable. Identify each center with symbols as well as words.

The planning board should provide for the needs of the non-reader. Symbols may be drawn or painted directly on the board or may be placed on a card for more flexibility. Teacher supply catalogues, advertisements for instructional materials, or photographs of materials can offer a source to identify the centers. Photographs of children working in the area could also be used.

Hangers or pockets for name cards are placed in the space identified for each center. There may be one hanger for each center or hangers may be used to limit the number of children in a center. Cup hooks or picture hangers make workable hangers for the planning board. Peg board hangers or golf tees work better with peg board. Large push pins can be used on the bulletin board.

Envelopes, library card pockets and colored paper bags may be used to hold name cards. Hangers may also be used when attaching figures and symbol cards to the board making the planning board flexible.

Make a name card for each child. Make the card to carry out the theme or a card that is reusable. Plastic lids make durable name tags. Bulletin board idea books are helpful resources to get ideas for themes and patterns for figures to adapt to the planning board.

Introducing the Planning Board

The planning board has a variety of uses in the learning environment and must be introduced as an instructional aid. At the beginning of the year it may be used as a display to illustrate activities of the program for the parents as well as introducing the learning center arrangement with self-selected activities.

Introduce the planning board as an instructional aid after the children have mastered the school routine. Introduce the board to the children. At first provide limited choices. Have only a few centers for the selection. The centers should be the most familiar. Explain each center and the activities. Explain the procedure for using the planning board. Guide the children as they make their choice reminding them of the procedure. Talk about their choices and why. Be patient. Gradually add choices by adding more centers and activities in the centers.

Using the Planning Board

The planning board may be used in a variety of ways to encourage decision making, staying on task, individualizing instruction, and allowing the child to develop interest in the provided task. The following are suggested ways

to use the planning board.

1. The child makes a choice of centers at the planning board upon arrival in the room.
2. Centers may be assigned by the teacher. The child finds his name and works in the appropriate center.
3. The planning board may be used in transition from one activity to another. Upon completion of an assigned task the child may go to the board and make a choice for the next task. The task must be completed before the child returns to the board and makes a choice for the next task.
4. Children can match the symbols or words on the board to the area in the room.
5. Number recognition and counting skills can be reinforced by placing a numeral on the board to limit the number of children in the center or to limit the number by supplying a certain amount of hangers.
6. Attention span may be increased by setting a timer at the center. After the time limit the child may make another choice. Flashing lights, music, bell or alarm clock could also be a signal to make another choice.
7. The planning board can be used with the large group to discuss each center, the activities, and materials for the day. New materials and their uses could also be explained at this time.
8. The planning board can be used to review and evaluate center activities for the day. Talk about concepts learned.

9. Use the planning board to plan for the next day. Talk about some of the activities that will be available the next day. Give the children something to look forward to in the learning centers. This may also be a good time to demonstrate a new material.
10. At times games may be played when making choices at the planning board. For example, give the chidren a number card. All with a card with the numeral one may go to the planning board while the others wait, then all with numeral two, etc. Musical chairs is another game suitable, when the child is out then he may go to the planning board to select a center. Another game could be pass an object, when the music stops the child holding the object may make a selection of a learning center. Other games may be adapted for limiting children at the board and allowing time for selection. This may be helpful with large groups or on rainy days.
11. Talk to the chilren about their choices. Keep a record of choices. Ask them why they made a choice. Encourage thinking and language development.
12. Report to the parents the child's selections for a day or a week. The child may draw a picture of the self-selected activities for the day and take them home to share.

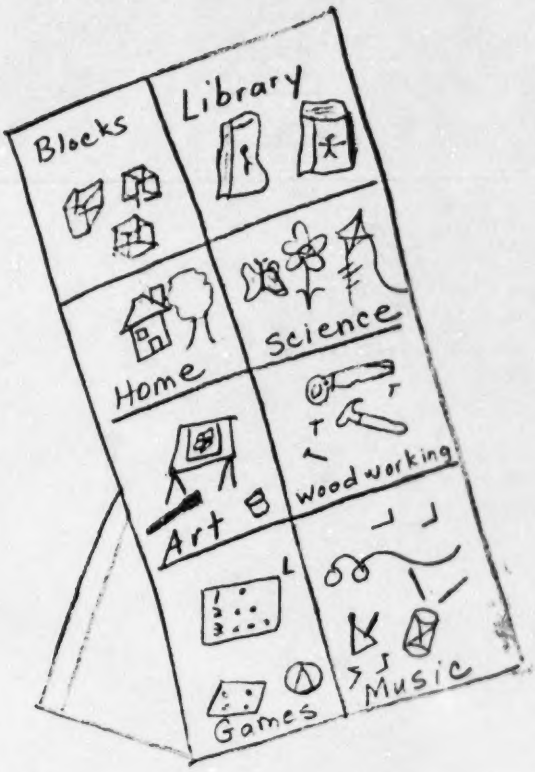
Remember when using the planning board give clear directions to the children about the procedure for using the planning board. Talk to the child about choice and encourage completion of the task before making another choice.

Points to Remember

1. A planning board is an instructional device that involves children in planning and selecting their own activities for the self-selected learning center period of the day.
2. A planning board may be any size, any shape and made from a variety of materials.
3. The planning board should have a theme to represent the centers.
4. The planning board should provide for the non reader. Use symbols as well as words identifying the centers.
5. Flexibility is appropriate. Make identifying center items changeable when possible.
6. Selection from the planning board may be organized in a variety of ways.
7. The planning board can be used as a visual aid to discuss center activities, to evaluate activities and motivate by introducing centers for the next day.

The planning board provides an opportunity for the child to make choices, and to think through these choices and recognize alternatives. Thinking, reasoning and problem solving for self-selective activity is organized yet not rigid. Children have an opportunity to declare interest, develop skills for evaluation and accept responsibility for learning. The planning board is an instructional device that can make the self-selected center time a delightful time of learning for the young child.

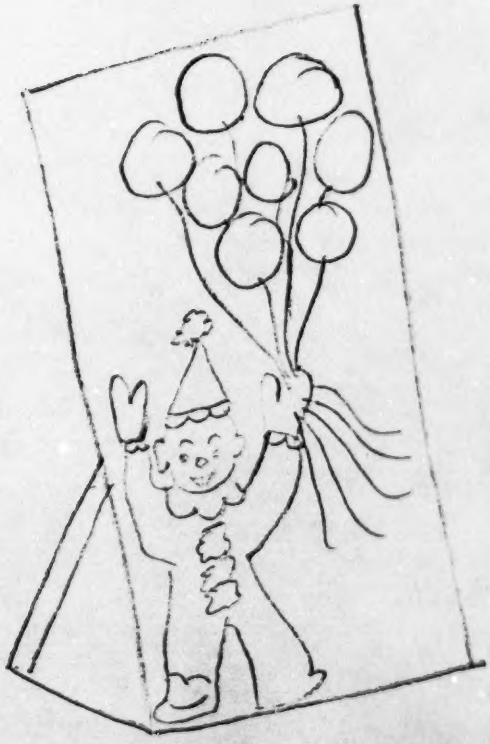
The following pages include illustrations and instructions for constructing planning boards.



Learning Centers

Instructions:

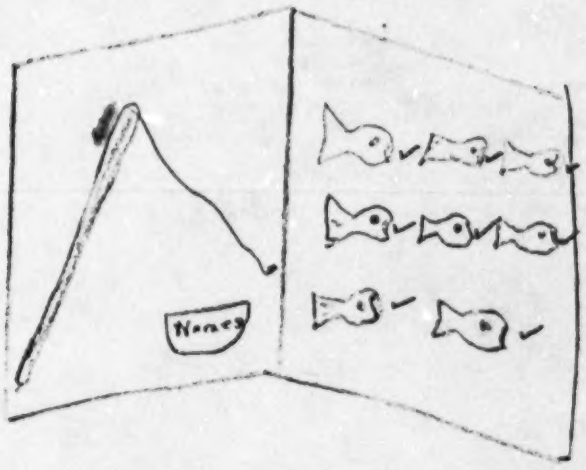
Tags can be taken from board and placed on a hook at the center or tags can be worn by the children while working in the center. Limit tags for number of children in each center.



Clown

Instructions:

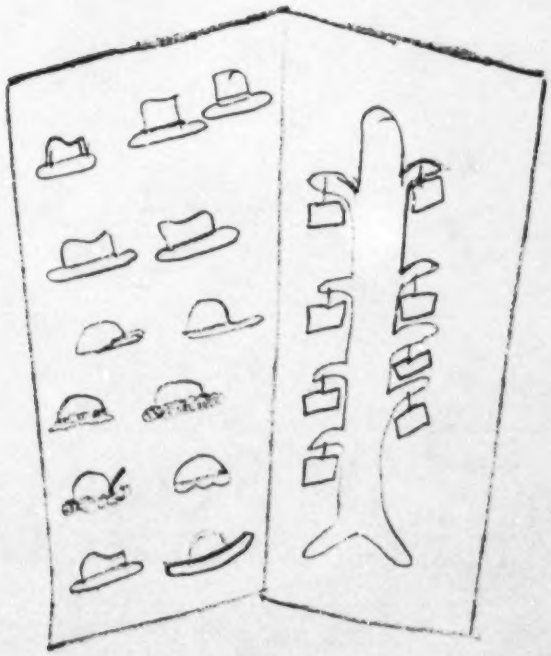
Place symbols and words to correspond with centers on the balloons. Children hang names in balloons.



Going Fishing

Instructions:

On a blue background attach a fish made of poster board for each center. Place a hook by the mouth of the fish. Children will take their name tag and hang with the fish as they select the center.



Hat Tree

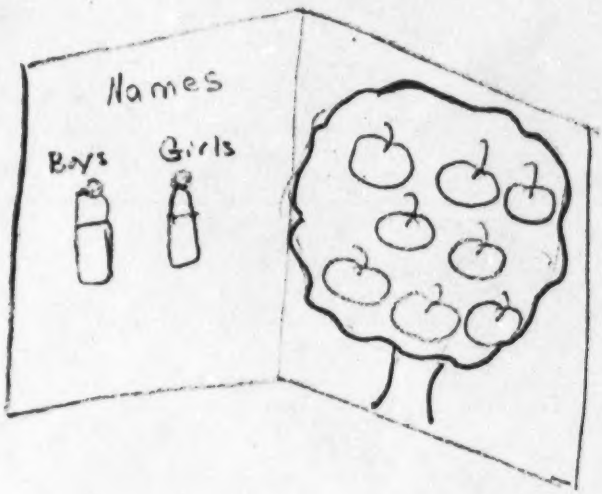
Instructions:

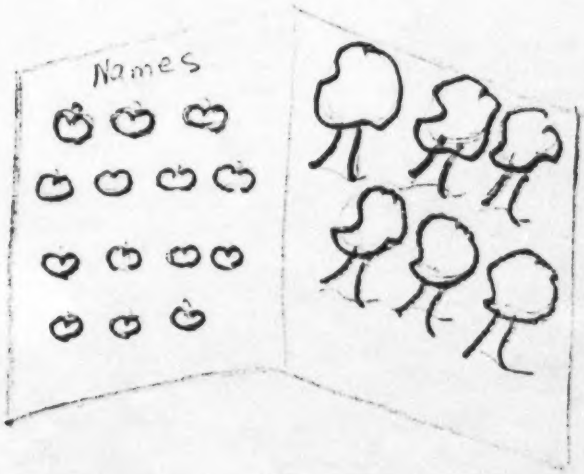
Each branch of the hat tree holds a symbol card representing a learning center. Children attach hat name tags as they select the center. The hat tree can be painted on a board or a hat tree may be constructed for center selection.

Apple Tree

Instructions:

Name tags are on the left. Apples designate the centers. A hook is on each apple for children to hang tag when selecting the center.

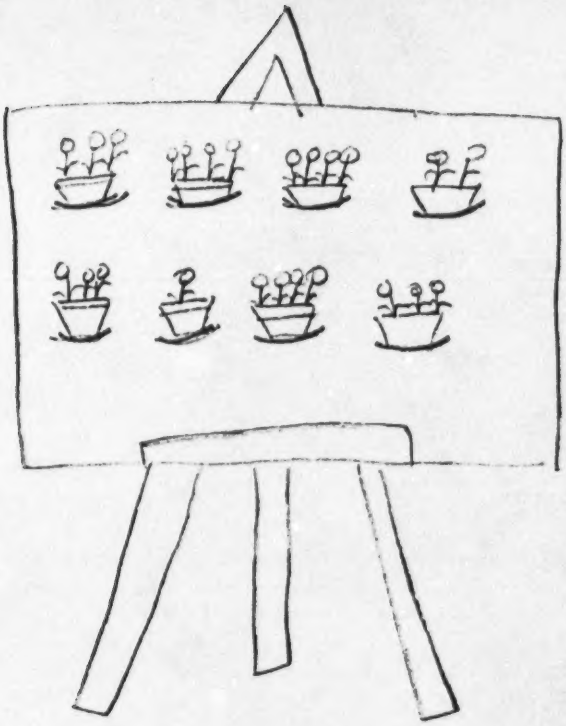




Apple Tree

Instructions:

Trees represent the learning centers. On each tree print the name of the center and draw symbols representing the center. Attach a hook to denote how many children may work at the center. Name tags are apples. As child makes selection the name tag is placed on the tree.



Flower Pot

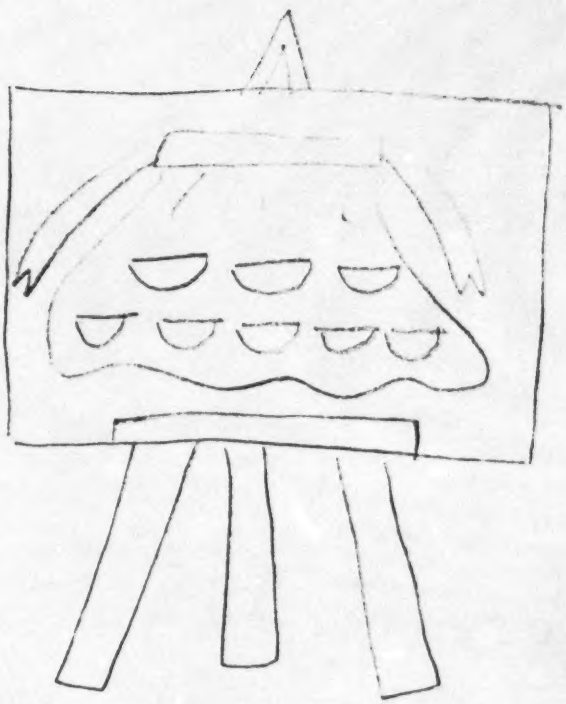
Instructions:

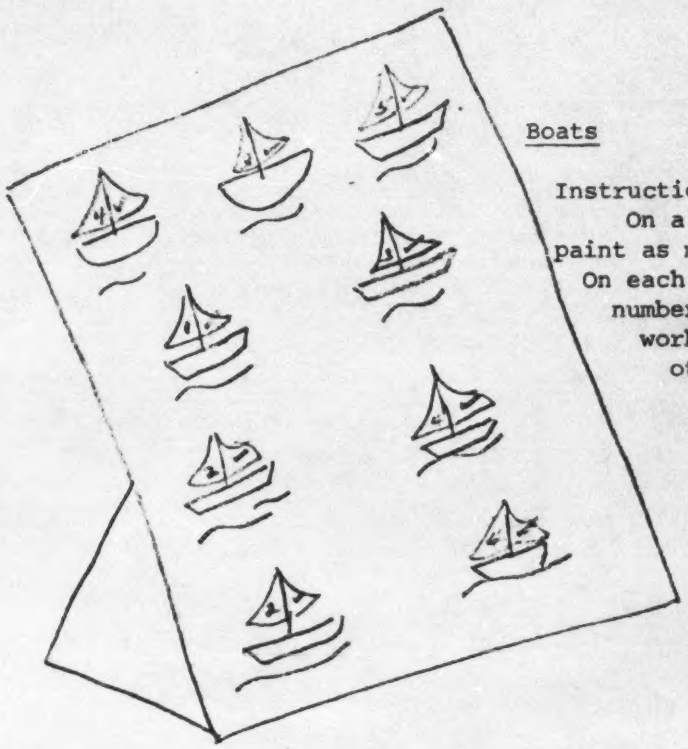
On a board draw flower pots to represent each center. On the pot write name of center and draw symbols. Construct flowers from poster board to represent the number of children to work in the center. These may be color coded. With hangers, hooks, or tape place flowers on the board. Children may take a flower to the selected center. On completion of task return flower to the pot. Clay pots or cans can be used replacing the board. When centers are not opened remove flowers from the pot. Flower pots or cans may be placed in center area or in a central location in the classroom.

Apron

Instructions:

Apron may be made of fabric, heavy poster board or painted on board. Pockets should have a symbol representing the center. Pockets may be made of fabric or an envelope.

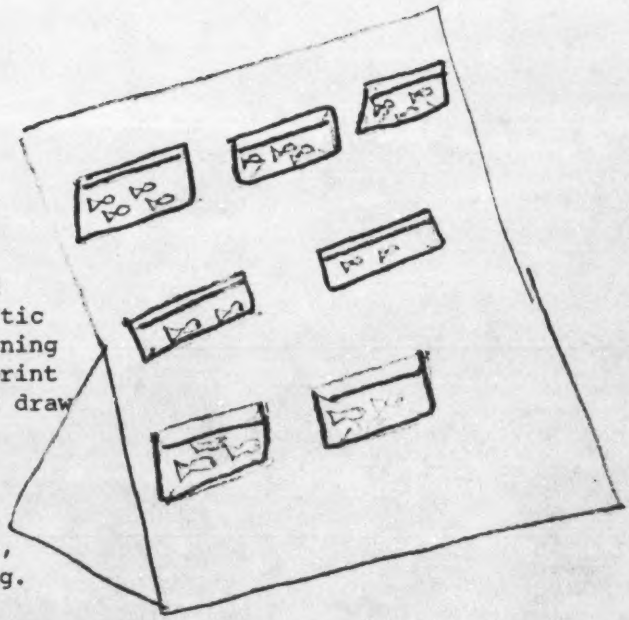




Boats

Instructions:

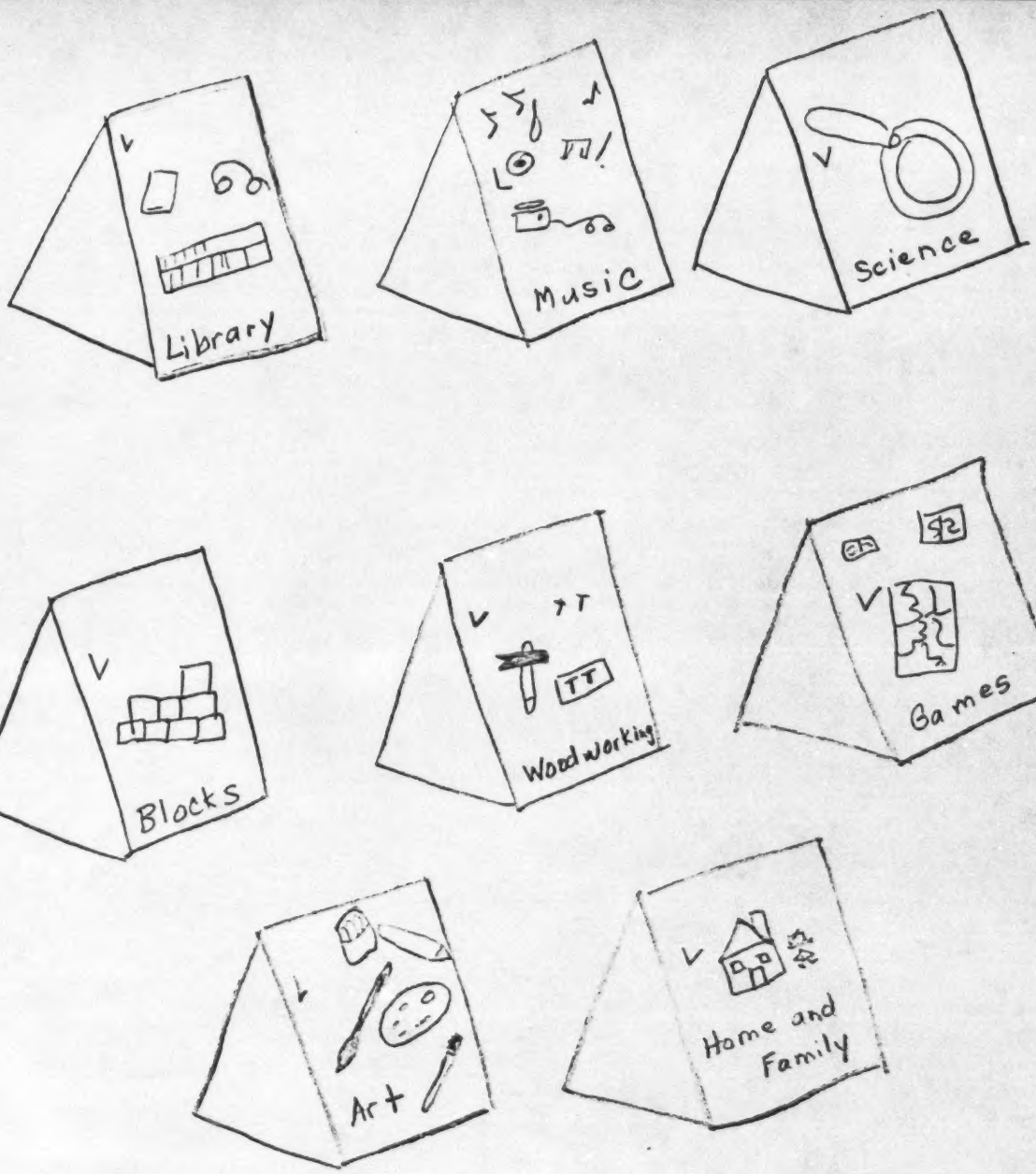
On a light blue background paint as many boats as are centers. On each sail place a removable number denoting how many may work in the center. On the other sail place a hook for name tags. On the boat place the picture or symbol for the center and the name of the center.



The Aquarium

Instructions:

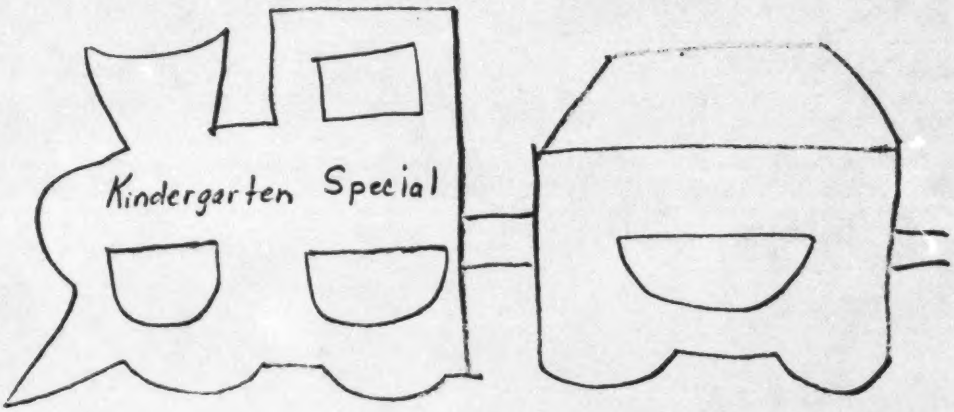
On a light blue board attach the numbers of plastic bags to represent the learning centers. Below each bag print the name of the center and draw symbols to represent each center. Names may be written on fish or other water animals and as children select the center, names are placed in the bag.



Planning Center

Instructions:

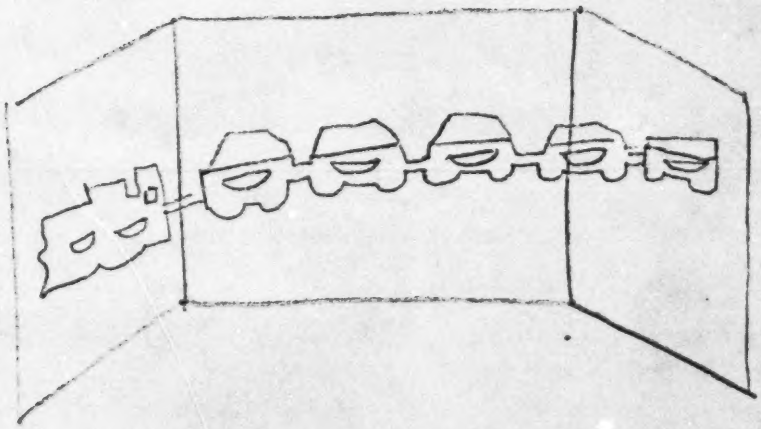
Construct a board for each center. Place by center area in the classroom. Board may have one hook for name tags or the number of hooks needed to limit children working in the area. To identify the center use symbols, pictures or photographs of children working in the center.

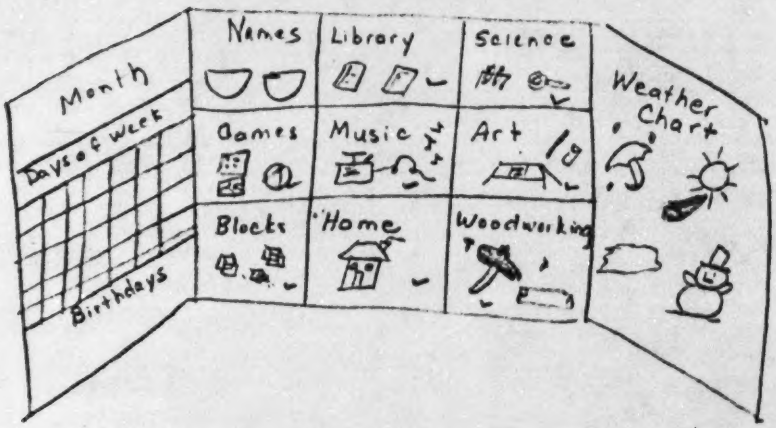


Train

Instructions:

Cars on the train represent centers. Add as many cars as needed. Pockets or hooks may be used to hold name tags. Symbols for the center may be attached to the top of the car. The train may be cut out and braced to stand or attached to a board

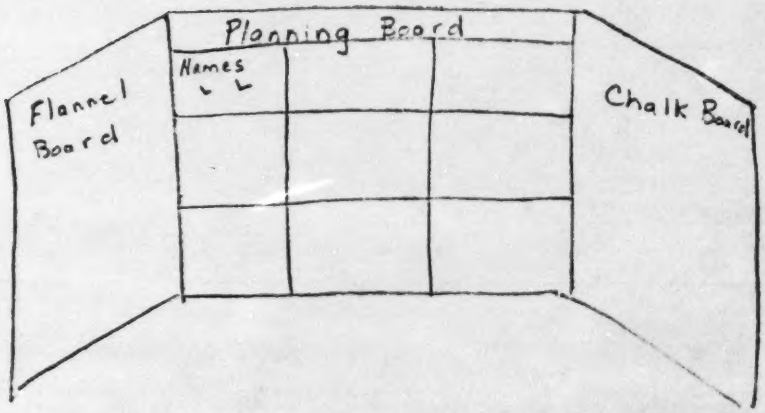




Planning Board, Calendar and Weather Chart

Instructions:

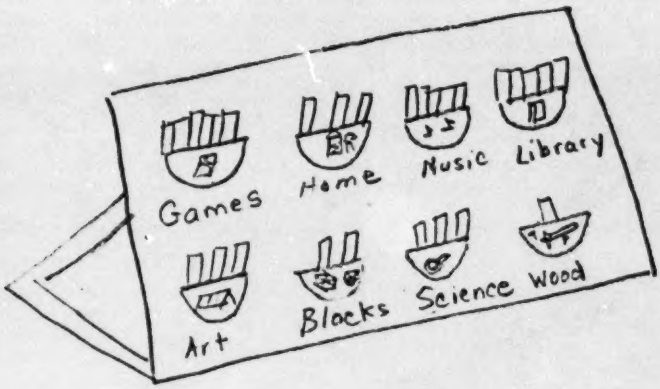
Hinge three boards together. On one board draw day by day calendar frame. Make cut outs for each month. On the middle board make sections for each learning center. Identifying centers with symbols and words. Children can make selection by placing name tag on a hook on the board. The third board can be a weather chart to record the weather for the day.



Planning Board, Flannel Board and Chalk Board

Instructions:

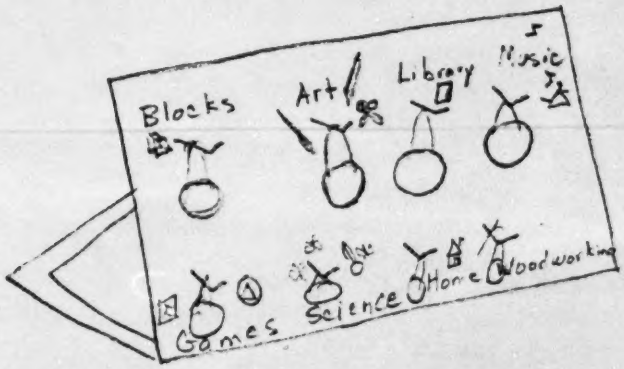
Hinge three boards together. Cover one board with felt or flannel. The center board will be the planning board. Identify centers with symbols and words. Paint the third board with chalk board paint. Chalk board paint may be purchased at a paint store.



Pocket Board

Instructions:

On a board attach a pocket made of envelopes , library pockets, or colored paper bags. On each pocket draw symbols for centers or glue pictures from catalogues or advertisements representing the center. Children may make selections by placing name card in the pocket or taking a paper strip from the packet. Pockets could be color coded to centers.



Color Coded Centers

Instructions:

On a board glue an item that will denote the learning center. Example: small paintbrush - art. Write the name of the center and beneath the name attach a hook. Make different colored circles from poster board for each center. Attach the same color yarn. Children wear these while working in the center.

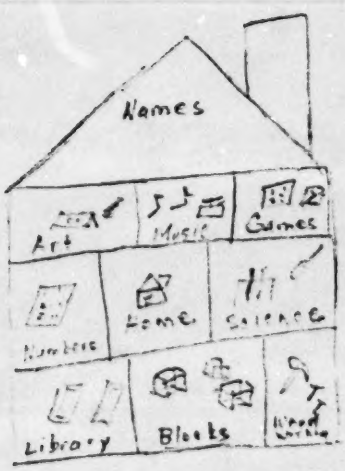
Cut Out Planning Boards

Instructions:

Cut shape of house, school bus, tree, car, truck or various animals from peg board or ply wood. Paint and then attach card with centers or draw centers directly on the board. Identify centers with symbols and words. Children may select center by placing their name on the board or taking a tag from the board and wearing it while working in the center.

Examples:

Bus: Windows represent centers



House: Rooms represent centers

Suggested Readings For Developing Learning Centers

Broman, Betty L. The Early Years in Childhood Education. 2nd ed. (Dallas: Houghton Mifflin Company), 1982.

Davidson, Tom et. al. The Learning Center Book: An Integrated Approach. (Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc.), 1976.

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